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Ministry of Forests and Range

SCIENCE TO ASSIST WITH BEETLE RESPONSE

VICTORIA – The Province is investing $1.5 million in mountain pine beetle research aimed at protecting the forest economy and environment that Interior communities rely on, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"This research will lead to practical solutions to the challenges the pine beetle is creating in our forests," said Coleman. "Scientists are looking at ways we can manage the timber supply so we can maintain forest and mill jobs. Research will also help us conserve forest values such as water quality that are being threatened by the infestation."

More than 25 beetle-related projects are being carried out this year under the forest science program of the Forest Investment Account (FIA). Projects will address priority information needs for mitigating impacts of the mountain pine beetle epidemic. These include:

- the University of Northern British Columbia examining impacts of beetle attack in young pine stands;
- Thompson Rivers University conducting studies to better understand effects on hydrology when beetle-killed trees are no longer absorbing water from beneath the forest floor;
- the University of British Columbia testing if fertilization increases the ability of mature pine to resist beetle attack in lightly infested areas; and
- the Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada evaluating forest road construction techniques to improve access to attacked forests.

In total, the FIA forest science program is spending a total of $16.15 million this year in research on sustainable forest management and timber growth, the maintenance of 32 long-term research forests and installations, and research extension to ensure forest managers have access to the latest scientific information.

Strategic advice on the program's investment priorities is provided by the Forest Science Board, which represents industry, the research community, government and First Nations. Two new positions were recently added to the board to provide advice from a First Nations perspective. Beverly Bird will represent First Nations in the Interior, and Pamela Perreault will represent First Nations on the Coast. The appointments are part of moving forward in the spirit of the New Relationship with First Nations.

"We have embarked on an exciting journey to integrate, in a collaborative and respectful way, the traditional knowledge from First Nations into the forest science program's research and extension activities," said Dr. Bill Bourgeois, chair of the Forest Science Board.

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For a complete list of projects funded through the forest science program, download the 2006/07 business plan from www.fia-fsp.ca. For more information on the provincial Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, visit www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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